Brussels sprouts: a vegetable crop competing in a global marketplace

Only a handful of growers specialize in Brussels sprouts. Near Pain Court, Ontario, Dave VanSegbrook (L) and Jean Marie Laprise are the largest Brussels sprout producers in Canada. The plumpest sprouts go to the fresh market — Ippolito Produce in Burlington — and the remainder is destined for the Bonduelle processing plant in Tecumseh. However, storm clouds are on the horizon to keep competitive in a global market while operating in Ontario’s unfriendly business environment. Photos by Rosemary Chaput.

KAREN DAVIDSON

Brussels sprouts, common fare for holiday dinners, are uncommonly difficult to grow. That’s why Dave VanSegbrook and partner Jean Marie Laprise have combined their resources to grow the specialty Brassica crop.

“Brussels sprouts are a very labour-intensive crop,” explains Laprise, during a field tour near Pain Court, Ontario. “The crop is planted May 1 and doesn’t get harvested until late October and November, so that’s six months of scouting for disease, insects and fertility requirements.

The cold-season crop is vulnerable to disease such as Alternaria and to insects such as aphids, diamondback moth, cabbage loopers and imported cabbage worm. The cruciferous vegetable is also vulnerable to other lower-cost, temperate-climate jurisdictions in California, the Netherlands and Belgium where harvesting can take place over months rather than the nine-week period in Ontario. The partners invested in another state-of-the-art harvester this year, but as the behemoth rolls efficiently through the crop, remember that the iron is unproductive in storage for 10 months of the year.

Altogether, 115 staff are needed from the field to packing line to clean, sort and pack for two end users: the fresh market at Ippolito Produce in Burlington and freezer processor Bonduelle in Tecumseh. Not every Brussels sprout is destined for prime time, nestled beside the festive turkey. Take a closer look at the buds which form between the stems of the stalk. The growth habit of the plant is such that only 20 per cent of the sprouts meet the 1 1/8 inch to 1 3/8 inch size requirements of the fresh market. The marble-sized remainders must find a home in the processing sector.

As Laprise inspects the end-of-season packing line, searching for efficiency improvements, he points out that several million dollars have been invested over the years to keep competitive. The business has significant risk with very limited market opportunities. The crop contract is not negotiated under the umbrella of the Ontario Processing Vegetable Growers but directly with buyers. Brussels sprouts are not carrots, potatoes or broccoli where there is higher consumer demand and volumes.

“Our capital costs per unit are much higher than competitors,” says Laprise. “The increase in Ontario’s minimum wage ($14/hour as of January 1) is going to affect our competitiveness and I don’t think we will be able to recapture the money from the marketplace. We have driven costs out of our system for the last 25 years, and now I don’t know where to turn. Extra labour costs will negatively impact our profit margins.”

As much as the newspaper headlines have focussed on minimum wage increases, Laprise is more worried about the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and its re-evaluation of critical crop protection products such as Bravo, Admire and others affecting production of Brussels sprouts and other vegetable crops.

Continued on page 3
Major spike in cost of doing business

After months of intense lobbying, Ontario’s agriculture industry learned that not much will budge in Bill 148: Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. On November 15, Charles Sousa, Ontario’s minister of finance, issued a full economic statement that committed to a minimum wage increase from $11.60/hour to $14/hour on January 1. This unprecedented increase is expected to cost Ontario horticulture an extra $165 million next year, says broccoli grower Ken Forth, chair of the Labour Issues Coordinating Committee (LICC). If all Ontario agriculture is included, then the dent is $297 million. With these added burdens, growers will be looking to the marketplace to help absorb these extra costs.

In its economic forecast, the government did acknowledge the vulnerability of the edible horticulture sector by earmarking $60 million for a competitiveness fund over two years, citing the sector’s unique position as a price-taker in the global market. “The $60 million will be helpful to growers in helping them compete in a changing business climate,” says Jan VanderHout, chair of the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association (OFVGA). “The new reality is cap and trade, rising energy costs and minimum wage increases.”

Those growers who are most affected by these rising costs are those who are heavy users of electricity, natural gas and labour. As Ken Forth points out, $400 million of Ontario investment has already left the province to build state-of-the-art greenhouses in the more business-friendly U.S. As growers measure harvest results and look towards the 2018 planning cycle, OFVGA leaders will be meeting with Ontario ministry of agriculture officials the week of November 20 to discuss how the funds will be expected the funding mechanism will hinge on Allowable Net Sales as part of a Self-Directed Risk Management-like program. It could be spring 2018 before funds are available. Just as important are other important labour issues contained within Bill 148. They concern scheduling, overtime pay and hours worked. “All agricultural exemptions need to be maintained,” says VanderHout. “We need all hands on deck when it’s time to plant, time to harvest. We can’t forecast a heat wave that causes a surge of production. We can’t schedule in advance.”

In the lobbying efforts in recent months, the OFVGA and LICC have been drilling down into these related issues. “Our industry is at the tipping point and only time will tell how fast our industry can restructure,” says Forth.

The cumulative effects of legislative changes are wearing heavily on growers. “In the next six months as we head into the June 2018 Ontario election, we will have a non-partisan approach, making sure that all provincial parties are aware of agriculture’s role in the economy and the factors impacting our success,” says VanderHout.

Strike at Ippolito ends

About 20 workers at Ippolito Produce picketed the Ontario Food Terminal in mid-November, disrupting business for a week, in their bid for better wages and job security. “Ippolito Produce and the Teamsters union representing our employees were able to reach a tentative agreement on November 17,” reported Dave Shepherd, director human resources for Ippolito Produce.
“We are extremely concerned that we will lose access to important pesticides for disease and insect control,” says Laprise. “It’s crucial for us to produce quality product for the market, otherwise our customers will buy from the U.S. and Europe. The PMRA is now at a point where it will sell out Canadian agriculture if it’s not careful and Canadian consumers will be getting its produce from China, Mexico and the U.S. where they can use the same pesticides that we may not. Quite seriously, PMRA could kill the vegetable industry.”

Dave VanSegbrook brings perspective from a recently completed trip to the Netherlands. “Admire (imidacloprid) was removed from registered usage three years ago in the Netherlands. Since the loss, growers have witnessed reduced quality from increased and uncontrolled insect pressure. This has led to higher costs and more discards from the packing shed. A neighboring country still has registration of imidacloprid, not having to bear the increased costs and reduction in revenue that the growers in the Netherlands now suffer.”

The law of unintended consequences is at play. One of the key themes in the produce industry is how to reduce food waste. By banning specific crop protection products, regulators may not have realized the consequence of increased waste in the field and on the packing line as growers try to meet customer demands for quality produce. This is more evidence of the complexity of growing specialty crops.

Ippolito Inc has been marketing Brussels sprouts since the 1970s, a track record that makes the firm a specialist in a specialty commodity. In fact, the company is one of the major suppliers to North America.

“Canadians at that time consumed more Brussels sprouts than our neighbours to the south,” recalls Steve Dimen, co-chief operating officer, Ippolito Inc., Burlington, Ontario. “In order to create a 12-month program for Canada, Joel Ippolito travelled to the Baja peninsula of Mexico in 2001 when he started test plots. The success of this program has positioned us well for the healthy eating trend in the last 15 years.”

With growth in the retail market, the company has spent time and dollars on research and development for value-added sprouts. The result is a microwaveable bag for whole and half sprouts in addition to a line of shredded sprouts. All of these items are washed and dried prior to packaging.

“Laprise Farms represent a very important piece of our local Brussels sprouts program,” says Dimen. “They have been growing partners with the Ippolito’s for more than 25 years. Unfortunately, the local season only lasts a couple months every year. To ensure we have a good supply for 12 months, we diversify our program throughout the southwestern United States and Mexico.”

“Trucks haul tons at a time to the nearby packing line for washing, sorting and packing. Altogether, 115 staff are required for the Brussels sprouts operation from field to packing line. The operation is CanadaGAP-certified.

NEW DATE
NEW LOCATION

NOTICE OF MEETING

is hereby given that the 159th Annual Members and Directors’ Meeting of the
ONTARIO FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GROWERS’ ASSOCIATION
will be held at the
HILTON HOTELS & SUITES NIAGARA FALLS/FALLSVIEW
6361 Fallsview Boulevard | Niagara Falls ON L2G 3V9
February 20, 2018

Election of Directors of the Association will take place as well as dealing with resolutions and any other business that may arise.
NOVA SCOTIA

Scotian Gold Cooperative installs high-efficiency apple production lines

Celebrating its 60th year, Scotian Gold Cooperative Ltd. has invested $5.5 million in two high-efficiency production lines for its Coldbrook, Nova Scotia facility. If there are no traffic jams, each line can process about 30 bins an hour.

The federal government made a $1.75 million repayable loan through the Growing Forward 2, AgriInnovation Program. The expansion has the potential to double packaging capacity over the next decade.

“The optimism is based on the doubling of Nova Scotia apple exports since 2014. Provincial statistics show that exports, mostly to the U.S., have grown from 1.8 million kg to almost 4.0 million kg in 2016. The value has also doubled to $15 million. The top three varieties now are Honeycrisp (325,000 bushels), Cortland (260,000 bushels) and McIntosh (200,000 bushels). Honeycrisp is a finicky variety to grow, harvest and store. For example, each apple needs to be stem-clipped to prevent a puncture in the skin.

“The new facility is an example of Scotian Gold’s willingness to invest in the future of our growers, our employees and the apple industry,” says David Parrish, president and CEO, Scotian Gold Cooperative Ltd. “Over the next number of years, the apple volume will increase for varieties such as Honeycrisp, Ambrosia and SweeTango. This facility will have the capability to supply expanding markets in a timely and efficient manner.”

There are 33 producers who own the tree fruit cooperative which is the largest apple packing and storage operation in Eastern Canada.

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada October 27, 2017 news release, files from Halifax Chronicle-Herald.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

P.E.I. Potato Board takes to the airwaves

For the first time, the Prince Edward Island Potato Board has filmed and produced a 30-second TV ad that’s set to air in Ontario and all Atlantic provinces. It will air primarily in local markets on Hockey Night in Canada and other digital channels.

“We wanted to connect with people or connected with farming and show the passion for what we do,” says Kendra Mills, marketing director, PEI Potato Board. “This ad showcases real farmers and real potato farms.”

Although the $1 billion potato industry is central to P.E.I.’s economy, the TV ad is considered an important outreach to those in the region. The launch timing coincides with the end of the 2017 harvest and the start of the main shipping season. The media schedule will take the ad into mid-December.

What does it take to grow a quality potato? It takes an iron backbone of our economy, it’s a major part of our culture and PEI wouldn’t be the same without it.”

The province of P.E.I. has so much to be proud of and thankful for in our potato industry here on P.E.I.,” says Rodney Dingwell, chair of the PEI Potato Board. “It’s the potato farms.”

The province of PEI celebrates its 60th year, the potato industry is central to PEI’s economy, the TV ad is considered an important outreach to those in the region. The launch timing coincides with the end of the 2017 harvest and the start of the main shipping season. The media schedule will take the ad into mid-December.

What does it take to grow a quality potato? It takes an iron backbone of our economy, it’s a major part of our culture and PEI wouldn’t be the same without it.”

The province of PEI provides some funding for the project. To see the ad, go here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnLHJ3MwER8

QUEBEC

Metro expands click-and-collect service

Metro, considered the third largest grocer in Canada after Loblaw and Sobeys, is expanding its footprint in the online marketplace. The grocer says 60 per cent of Quebec’s 8.2 million population will have access to the delivery service by the end of 2017.

Metro is now serving Quebec City, enabling shoppers to place an order for pick-up at the Metro Plus St-David (Beauport) location or opt for home delivery within the service area, from Lévis to L’Ancienne-Lorette, and from Quebec City to Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures.

The company first gained success in the Greater Montreal Area, offering between 20,000 and 25,000 SKUs. If orders are placed by midnight, customers can receive next-day delivery for a fee that ranges from $4 to $8 depending on the day and time.

In-store staff has been trained to select the freshest in-store products and to keep them in-store in a dedicated tri-zones area – temperate, refrigerated and frozen – until they are collected or delivered. The delivery trucks have been outfitted with the same zones. The infrastructure is designed to uphold Metro’s guaranteed freshness promise.

Metro started testing online grocery delivery in Montreal, Quebec, in late 2016. While plans are underway to expand to Ontario, no launch date has been announced.
Manitoba’s premier Brian Pallister has announced a fixed carbon price of $25 per tonne while exempting farmers from a fuel tax. The price is more than the federal government’s demand of $10 per tonne by 2018 but less than the staged plan to reach $50 per tonne by 2022. The tax means another five cents a litre on the price of gasoline.

“We’re quite pleased that the premier has taken the time to consult with growers,” says Dan Sawatsky, general manager, Keystone Potato Producers’ Association. “We understand that climate change needs to be addressed. The government has found ways to address the issue limiting economic harm.”

That’s good news for Manitoba’s potato growers who just had their “best year ever” according to Sawatsky. On average, growers harvested 359 cwt/acre on 613,915 seeded acres. That’s up considerably from 348 cwt/acre last year. The ability to irrigate, in the face of 50 per cent of normal rainfall, partially contributed to the banner year.

Manitoba is unique in that the province must plan for both drought and floods. Its experience and perspective are useful to all Canadians. In a key document called “A Made-in-Manitoba Climate and Green Plan,” the premier acknowledges the importance of agriculture to the provincial economy. When all agriculture, food and beverage processing is accounted for, agriculture accounts for about 12 per cent of the province’s GDP. He cites the fact that farmers are price takers in the domestic and global economies which gives little room to manage rising costs such as fuel.

Accordingly, the Made-in-Manitoba plan includes two important exemptions for farmers and agricultural operations. First, farm operations will be exempt from the application of the carbon levy for fuel use for their farming operations. Marked fuels will not increase due to any carbon pricing being applied on diesel or gasoline at the wholesale, distribution or pump levels. Second, agricultural emissions will not be targeted for direct sector reductions via the carbon price or other aspects of this plan.

While agriculture contributes 32 per cent of Manitoba’s greenhouse emissions, there is recognition for the opportunity to sequester carbon. Many other techniques and programs will be enhanced. For instance, precision farming can improve fertilizer efficiency.

The 64-page plan is a thoughtful, in-depth assessment of how to withstand, respond to and recover from impacts of climate change. The Climate and Green Plan is published for citizen feedback by November 30. For more details, go to: http://bit.ly/2A6K0U1
The Ontario-based Fresh from the Farm (FFF) school-fundraising program completed its largest and most successful campaign to date at the end of November 2017. 2017 marked the fifth year this healthy alternative to traditional fundraising program was offered to Ontario schools. Eligible Ontario schools sell bundles of fresh Ontario-grown root vegetables and apples with 40 per cent of all sales going back directly to each school. In 2017, nearly 500 schools across Ontario sold more than one million pounds of fresh fruit and vegetables raising more than $750,000 for their schools.

Not only does the FFF program provide a healthy fundraising alternative for schools but at the same time it increases the school community’s awareness and consumption of healthy Ontario fruit and vegetables while supporting local growers. “After five years of continuous growth, the FFF fundraising program has shown there is demand for a healthy alternative in schools. The FFF not only supports Ontario schools but also supports Ontario’s economy by providing Ontario fruit and vegetable farmers with additional markets for their healthy products. The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association looks forward to the continued growth of the program and on behalf of Ontario’s fruit and vegetable growers thanks the school communities for supporting local food.”

Dan Tukendorf is program manager, Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association.

More than 500 Ontario schools raise funds through Fresh from the Farm

Teaching food skills to students

More than 30 classrooms across Canada hosted “Chef for a Day” on November 21 to encourage healthy eating habits and food skills development. Established by the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) as part of their Freggie Children’s program, Chef for a Day is a unique educational opportunity where kids learn how to make an easy, healthy lunch from start to finish. They then get to eat their creations, all while learning about how to make the healthiest choices to fuel their growing bodies.

“We know that the development of proper food skills is an essential foundation for healthy eating, and that the best way to learn is with a hands-on experience,” says Ron Lemaire, CPMA president. “We’re hoping this event can provide awareness at the community level as to the benefits of teaching children to cook and sending them to school with more nutritious lunches.”

Participating teachers are provided with a step-by-step blueprint for the event, and are encouraged to enlist the help of local chefs, dietitians, or keen parents. Each event focuses on health, food safety and great taste with the intention of including students at every step. Piloted in 2015 in Nova Scotia, the program has been tailored to a national level, and can be hosted with minimal funds.

“It can be extremely challenging for teachers to execute one-off educational programs with limited funding and resources. With the easy to follow blueprints and gift cards to purchase ingredients, CPMA has developed a winning combination to get more kids engaged in healthy eating while respecting busy schedules,” added Kim Hickman, Community Dietitian, Health Promotion Unit, Government of Yukon. “This program is a wonderful way to get kids engaged and excited to make healthy meals.”
Improving packing line efficiency and...reducing food waste

As part of the Ontario Produce Marketing Association’s (OPMA) food waste reduction initiative, Value Chain Management International (VCMI) worked with Gwillimdale Farms (GF) headquartered in New Liskeard, Ontario to implement effective daily management systems for their carrot, beet, parsnip, onion and potato packing lines. Gwillimdale’s primary operation – established south of Lake Simcoe in the outskirts of the Holland Marsh – includes 1,000 acres of carrots, potatoes, onions, beets and parsnips. GF also recently commenced vegetable production in the New Liskeard area, to meet the exponential increase in demand that has occurred in recent years. This demand culminates from GF’s proven ability to consistently supply high-quality products and meet exacting customer demands on volume and format.

Since the owners, John and Cristina Hambly, first invested in on-site vegetable packaging equipment in 2007, GF’s packaging facilities have expanded to three production lines that wash, bag and cut – if required – an average of 250,000 pounds (five tractor trailer loads) of vegetables each day. While most of the vegetables processed are grown on their own farms, GF also purchases Canadian, American and Mexican produce from preferred partners to ensure a constant year-round supply of excellent quality products for their customers.

The capital investment required to establish and operate these extended packaging facilities has been significant. The Growing Forward 2 funded project between GF and VCMI looked to improve the performance of packaging facilities by making minor improvements at multiple points along the packing line and associated activities, such as procurement and marketing.

Identifying improvement opportunities

Challenges faced by Gwillimdale that can negatively impact performance include 1) the number of labels under which which vegetables are packed, 2) enormous variations in order size, 3) differing pack size, and 4) late receipt and/or ongoing changes to orders. On any day, Gwillimdale fulfills multiple customer orders with a variety of products, packed in different sizes. Variations in the size, quality, consistency and timing of vegetables received directly from the farm or out of storage can also impact performance.

A tool known as overall equipment effectiveness (OEE) was used to calculate how closely Gwillimdale’s primary packing lines were operating compared to what is possible. OEE provides a normalized means to compare performance across packing lines and facilities, identifying improvement opportunities and the root causes of current issues.

OEE is calculated by measuring the following three factors: % planned run time x % first time quality x % planned run rate

Up time is the number of hours that the equipment is planned to be in use. Run rate is the maximum speed which the equipment can operate effectively, and first time quality is the percentage of products that meet intended quality and thus do not require rework or are not rejected. A good target OEE is 85 per cent – below 85 per cent equates to improvement opportunities; an above 85 per cent equates to operational excellence.

A number of issues were identified that impacted the performance of the packing line, particularly when packing carrots. Opportunities to improve GF’s OEE for carrots by a third were identified against the targeted 85 per cent. Certain easily observable issues, such as a single washing and polishing line feeding two grading lines (each handling differently sized carrots), would require considerable investment in capital.

Other less obvious issues stemmed from the weighing and packing equipment. At times, this issue led to a backup of carrots that forced both lines to stop entirely. Line stoppages created waste and challenges that impact the entire business—from front-line workers to senior management and dispatch.

Another issue related to the management of packaging materials. The number of pack sizes, formats and designs – along with associated items, such as clips to seal bags shut – make managing the supply of packaging materials a complex process. Order-to-delivery cycle times and variations in quality add further complexities to the management of packaging materials.

Misfires

The most common issue impacting the lines’ performance was identified as bagging equipment misfires. The OEE identified that misfires most commonly occurred when the weighing head incorrectly grabbed a new bag ready for filling, or carrots protruded from the top of the bag. The latter was one of the factors that led to the third most common cause: incorrectly closed bags. Bags were also tearing during their filling, closing and packing into 50 lb. masters.

A key insight gained from the cause and effect analysis is that the bagger’s operation and function varied. This was due to tribal knowledge from individual operators that was gained over time. During the year, at least three separate people operated the machine.

There were no written standard operating procedures based on experience for workers to follow. Nor was there a process for monitoring performance or reporting incidences by operator, in a manner that could be directly acted upon as part of a continual improvement process. In addition, the main operators did not tend to proactively seek advice when an issue arose, which exacerbated the impact that misfires had on performance.

Reasons why the present situation of operator effectiveness had arisen was largely due to the management of staff having essentially remaining unchanged, while the scale and complexity of GF’s packing line had evolved markedly. Limited year-round access to local skilled workers has also played a role in shaping the current situation. The GF team determined that a sound business case existed for hiring a full time mechanically-minded person who lived locally.

Other potential causes lying behind the baggers’ underperformance included the material from which bags were constructed, bag design, and differences of ~1/8 inch (3 – 4mm) in the size of bags contained within the same wicket. Light-weight plastic has a greater tendency to tear or break loose from the bagger head. Bags with a larger number of smaller ventilation holes than traditional carrot bags were found to reduce the incidence of misfires, though the impact of these non-traditional bags on carrots’ freshness and shelf life had not been objectively evaluated.

Current variety and growing practices/conditions were also identified as causing misfires. Misshapen carrots can result from differences by variety and growing conditions (including weather, production practices and soil type).

Conclusions

Establishing a more structured management hierarchy would involve holding regular meetings between line operators and management. Line meetings would primarily take the form of a daily huddle before work commenced — to share the prior day’s performance and that day’s targets, and discuss any issues or problems discussed. Senior managers would meet weekly to discuss key performance indicators and pressing issues. More detailed monthly management meetings would involve a thorough review and discuss both opportunities and issues from operation and strategic perspectives.

The structure of daily management interactions would be supported by: 1) detailed job descriptions that define individuals’ responsibilities, the business operations for which they are accountable, and measurable targets against which their performance is measured; and 2) an organizational chart that graphically shows to whom individuals report — along with the teams, operations and functions for which they are directly responsible and therefore supervise.

Editor’s note: This is an excerpt from the case history. For the entire report, go here: http://bit.ly/2RlVuug
Honouring individuals who lead teams

Vaughn, Ontario -- For 26 years now, the Ontario Produce Marketing Association has honoured the industry’s brightest lights, both early in their careers and after a lifetime. This year’s Gala and Awards Ceremony was held November 17.

“The feedback we received that night was extremely positive!” commented Virginia Zimm, president of the OPMA. “Every year, I am amazed by the camaraderie and friendship that exists in this industry considering many are competitors. This event demonstrates that no matter what part you play in the value chain, we are all in this industry to achieve one common goal – increase production/consumption. It’s an opportunity to publicly congratulate those who demonstrate their commitment to the industry above and beyond regular business, while enjoying great food, music and reconnecting with friends and business associates.”

This year’s awards were presented to three deserving individuals whose efforts have made a significant impact in the produce industry over the course of the last year.

• The OPMA Fresh Award, presented to a young individual [under 40] who demonstrates a fervent determination to improve the quality, distribution or consumption of fruits and vegetables, was awarded to Matt Reker from Vineland Growers Cooperative.

• The Cory Clack-Streef Produce Person of the Year Award, presented to an individual who has worked tirelessly to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables through innovation, collaboration and hard work, was awarded to Dr. Martin Gooch, CEO of Value Chain Management International.

• Lastly, the OPMA Lifetime Achievement Award, presented to an individual who has dedicated their life to improving the transaction process between produce sellers and buyers to ultimately increase the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, was awarded to Fred Webber from the Dispute Resolution Corporation.

The OPMA would like to congratulate all the award recipients for their hard work and dedication to improving the quality, distribution and consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables both inside and outside of Ontario!

Every year, one lucky gala attendee is eligible to win the grand prize – a $3,000 travel voucher towards a trip of their dreams. Congratulations to Val Costa from the Ontario Food Terminal Board.

Moving forward, the OPMA is getting into the Christmas spirit by preparing for their annual Food Share program. They will partner with the Toronto Wholesale Produce Association and Daily Bread Food Bank to distribute more than two thousand 50 lbs. fresh produce boxes to deserving families across the GTA. If you wish to volunteer or donate produce, please contact the OPMA to find out how to get involved.

The race to win e-commerce consumers in food heated up with the announcement from Loblaw on November 15 to partner with Instacart. Loblaw’s decision is no doubt driven by the threat of Amazon moving more aggressively into food.

Positives for Loblaw include a solution for convenience-driven consumers in two of their most lucrative markets: Toronto and Vancouver. These early adopters are important customers at Loblaw stores that the grocer cannot afford to lose. These are high-margin shoppers willing to pay a premium. How much of a premium?

Loblaw has not announced its home delivery structure yet, however Instacart’s delivery fees offer some insight. Their prices range from a low of $3.99 depending on the order size and delivery time, to a high of $9.99 for a one-hour delivery of an order less than $35. On top of that, expect a service fee of 7.5 per cent of the value of the order.

Loblaw probably expects there is an opportunity to win some customers from others offering home delivery such as Walmart, Grocery Gateway and Vancouver’s service, Fresh St Market.

The pace of change is accelerating – note the December 6 rollout in Toronto -- and the move is not perfect from a Loblaw perspective. Consumers will shop online using Instacart, not Loblaw websites. This means Loblaw will not have direct contact with consumers.

The second issue for Loblaw is that consumers using this platform will not earn or be able to redeem PC points. Given the allure of PC Points, this could be a deterrent for some consumers. Avid PC Point collectors are probably the same early adopters who would want online shopping and delivery.

Loblaw also announced it would be closing 22 stores, citing rising labour costs in Ontario and Alberta and other competitive pressures. This is nothing new as population shifts, new stores are built and some locations just become unprofitable. With more food being sold in Shoppers Drug Mart and the shift to online shopping for food, expect to see more stores closing in the future.
**GREENHOUSE PRODUCTION**

**Mucci’s expands strawberry greenhouses**

KAREN DAVIDSON

Mucci Farms, a pioneer in growing strawberries under glass, is claiming top place in North America with its recently opened $12 million second phase. The original investment of $24 million was so successful in terms of agronomics and customer demand that expansion is moving swiftly.

“Mucci Farms can proudly say we are putting Kingsville, Ontario, on the map for having the largest strawberry greenhouse not only in Canada but in North America,” says Joe Spano, a vice-president of sales and marketing.

In 2018, the company expects to add 12 acres to the existing 24 acres of strawberries. The pristine white piping contributes to an other-worldly experience, especially when artificial lighting is turned on. Negotiating a lower electricity price was key in expanding.

The plan is to concentrate strawberry growing in Kingsville, and not to new facilities outside of Canada. The current phases also include the use of diffused glass which reduces stress on the plants by providing even sunlight. High-pressure fogging systems cool down the greenhouse in the hotter months. A swing gutter system allows for the amount of maximum plants per square meter.

The greenhouse-grown fruit is called Smuccies Sweet Strawberries. They are retailed at a range of $4.99 to $5.99 for a 12-ounce clamshell. The competitive advantage is that no pesticides are used and the flavour compares with field-grown. Furthermore, it’s a crop that can be grown year-round.

Building expertise in greenhouse strawberries is a new endeavor, expanding the range of products from greenhouse tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. Since partnering with Dutch growers Ton Bastiaansen and Joost van Oers in January 2016, Mucci Farms has seen accelerated growth and a greater demand for greenhouse-grown strawberries.

“Overwhelming, is the best way I can describe how our Smuccies are being received,” says Spano. “Super sweet, clean, on the shelf within 24 hours of harvest and grown in an environment that is unaffected by inclement weather.”

The product has received accolades from multiple industry associations for best packaging, best new fruit and best kid-centric product. At the recent Produce Marketing Association’s Fresh Summit Conference and Expo in New Orleans, the company won the Kids’ Choice Award for its Smuccies Layered Strawberry and Mango Dip.

Photo right: Smuccies Sweet Strawberries are in Ontario grocery stores now, in time for the holiday season. Photo by Glenn Lowson.

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Connecting producers with programs 1-888-247-4999 agricorp.com

**Insure your fruit by December 20**

For over 50 years, Production Insurance has proven to be a valuable and reliable risk management tool. Fruit growers whose crops have been impacted by things like cold temperatures, frost and hail have been compensated for loss and have found some peace of mind through Production Insurance.

**Not covered? Contact Agricorp today to sign up**

Fruit growers who want to enrol in Production Insurance or add newly planted acres, orchards or vineyards should contact Agricorp today to establish coverage by December 20.

**Step 1:** Contact Agricorp at 1-888-247-4999

**Step 2:** Meet with an adjuster who will assess your fruit and trees or vines, and provide you with an estimated liability.

**Step 3:** Pay your premium deposit. Your premium balance is due in the spring.

**Review before you renew**

Review your renewal documents before deciding on this year’s coverage and ask yourself:

- What changes have you made to your business?
- What risks does your farm face this year?
- Will your current coverage protect you if you experience a severe, unexpected loss?

Submit premium deposits, inventory reports and any coverage changes by December 20, 2017.

**New last year for apples, tender fruit and grapes**

- Tender fruit trees are now covered
- Younger trees and vines are eligible for coverage
- You can choose additional tree or vine coverage

To learn more about tree and vine coverage, call us or visit agricorp.com.

Growing Forward 2 Ontario Canada
On November 7 and 8, industry leaders representing the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) and the Canadian Horticultural Council (CHC) met with more than 50 parliamentarians and civil servants in Ottawa to discuss key issues currently affecting the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable sector.

Notably, CPMA and CHC representatives addressed the need for continued free and fair trade agreements with new and emerging markets to support industry, and advocated for the adoption of an integrated and collaborative approach to increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in a new Food Policy for Canada. Both issues are critical for the industry, and have severe implications on the cost and quality of produce, the health of Canadians, and Canada’s potential for economic growth, especially within the context of current NAFTA renegotiations. Industry representatives also discussed labour policy and the need for financial protection for produce sellers.

“The fresh fruit and vegetable industry plays a significant role in supporting Canada’s goals to provide safe, affordable, and accessible produce year-round,” stated Rick Alcocer, CPMA chair. “The produce supply chain had an estimated economic impact of $15.7 billion in real GDP and supported 181,566 jobs in 2016, all the while encouraging healthy eating habits.”

“Good health starts with what we put in our bodies, and we know that the healthiest foods are fruits and vegetables,” states Alvin Keenan, CHC president. “The federal government needs to assume a leadership role in offering accessible fruit and vegetable options to all Canadians, from coast to coast to coast.”

Following these productive meetings, CPMA and CHC hosted a reception featuring Half Your Plate Ambassador Chef Michael Smith. This well-attended event featured a food demonstration with Chef Michael and Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Lawrence MacAulay and provided representatives of the produce industry a more informal environment to network and cement relationships with parliamentarians and their staff.

Source: CHC November 9, 2017 news release.
The proposed Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) were published in Canada Gazette, Part I on January 21, 2017 and are expected to come into force in mid-2018.

Although much of the content of the proposed regulations concerns food safety and traceability, important trade and commerce requirements which pertain specifically to buyers and sellers of fresh fruits and vegetables are also part of the regulations. Specifically, there is a requirement for buyers and sellers of fresh fruits and vegetables to be members of the DRC unless exempt.

A DRC membership is required to trade fresh fruits and vegetables (i.e.: buy, sell, import, export) unless otherwise exempted as per the proposed regulations. Some buyers and sellers of fresh fruits and vegetables who were not previously subject to the requirements of the CFIA Licensing and Arbitration Regulations may be subject to the new requirement.

To prepare for the coming into force of the proposed regulations and ensure increased and wide awareness of the requirement, the DRC has embarked on an education and outreach initiative to ensure, to the extent possible, that there are no surprises. This includes cross-country presentations, factsheets and a self-assessment to assist in determining if one is subject to the proposed requirement for a DRC membership.

Presentations may be delivered in various formats and duration ranging from a high-level overview of the regulatory requirement with a focus on changes from the current regulation, to a 30-minute (or longer) presentation or seminar detailing DRC member’s rights and obligations and the dispute resolution process. To date presentations have taken place in PEI, Ontario and BC.

“DRC team members are available to present at events and there is no cost for this thanks to financial support from AAFC Growing Forward,” notes DRC President & CEO Fred Webber.

The following outreach materials are available in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Punjabi:

- Introduction and Background: Regulatory requirement for a membership in the Fruit and Vegetable Dispute Resolution Corporation
- Self-assessment: Agent, Grower’s Agent, Broker, Farm Marketers & Direct to Consumers, Grower, Shipper, Packer, Retail, Foodservice & (Certain) Restaurants, Wholesalers and Distributors

To learn more about the initiative or to schedule a presentation, contact the DRC at 613 234 0982 or info@fvrdc.com.

About the DRC
The DRC is a member-based organization whose core work is “business-to-business private commercial dispute resolution.” In other words, DRC is a referee between parties when the purchase and sale do not go smoothly or according to plan. The DRC provides the North American produce trade with the harmonized standards, procedures and services necessary to avoid and resolve commercial disputes in a timely, cost-effective manner. The DRC is a partner in ensuring fair and problem-free transactions and building long-term relationships. In addition to fulfilling a regulatory requirement, DRC membership is good business and good risk management as membership benefits are extensive and provide significant value and business protection.

The world has never seen a nematicide like this before.

Velum Prime nematicide is making big news. No wonder. Now you can make yield-robbing nematodes a thing of the past, and expect more out of your crop. It even offers early blight protection. To integrate it into your potato protection program, apply it in-furrow at planting. And give your potato yield a chance at being out of this world.

Get the yield-enhancing details at cropsceince.bayer.ca/VelumPrime
Success, succession, successful, successor

Every person who is in business has a goal to be successful in financial terms, but at some point they will need to answer what (or who) is it all for. Who will be their successor when they retire or pass on from life on this earth? Is good succession a measure of success?

As farm business owners we often have a relatively high net worth and from time to time we might feel pretty successful. Some people say there is no money in farming but this is actually not true. There is plenty of money in farming. You just can’t get any of it out. I

The Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers’ Association is the sole owner of The Grower. All opinions and opinions expressed in The Grower are those of the newspaper's editorial staff or contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Association.

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Get ready for field-level DNA identification

Researchers are a step closer to having a portable, hand-held device and an array of tests that can positively identify species in the field, by their DNA.

This approach is already being used to try to reduce food fraud with species such as fish, which costs consumers millions of dollars a year and can compromise their health.

Researchers at the University of Guelph, where the initial specific tests used with this device were developed, think it will have many applications in the fruit and vegetable sector too, particularly for identifying and verifying pests.

Dr. Amanda Naaum is a senior research scientist with the university’s new spin-off company, TRU-ID. At the Building Canada sesquicentennial lecture series in Guelph in early November, she demonstrated how the portable device she’s working with can give users a yes-or-no reading for samples of species whose DNA sequences have been recorded in the university’s Barcode Of Life Database (BOLD).

The database contains the barcodes or gene sequences for 500,000 species. It’s been assembled over the past 15 years as part of an international effort to barcode all species on the planet, led by the groundbreaking research and development of Guelph’s Prof. Paul Hebert. DNA barcoding uses a very short genetic sequence from a standard part of the genome, the way a supermarket scanner distinguishes products using the black stripes of the Universal Product Code.

Naaum says onsite analysis with portable technology such as the BioMeme two3 molecular diagnostic device she’s using holds great promise. With just one swab from a sample, she can collect enough cells to run what’s called a real-time PCR analysis onsite, using a smart phone app as an interface.

Real-time PCR uses a molecular probe to detect the presence of specific target DNA.

Here’s how it works. DNA from a sample is placed in a tube with the molecular probe and other reagents that allow copying of a specific section of DNA, using cycles of heating and cooling. If DNA from a specific target (in this case, a specific species) is present in a sample, that section of DNA is copied. The probe generates fluorescence during this copying process. If that DNA is absent, no fluorescence is generated because no DNA is copied.

The app contains species-specific test information related to hearing and cooling cycles needed to copy the target DNA. Naaum designs probes using sequences from BOLD as a reference that search for a specific region of DNA—a smaller portion of the DNA barcode—that is unique to the target species.

In this way, samples can be rapidly screened in under two hours.

Naaum says food retailers could use the device onsite in their distribution warehouses to make sure the food shipments they receive are authentic, before they’re packaged for the public. Or, in the case of species like fish, which are currently the focus of her work, inspectors could take it dockside to test if initial labelling is accurate, before imports get repackaged and shipped widely.

Naaum says portable species identification could be particularly helpful to find and differentiate apple aphid species. Two of these species, the green apple aphid (Alispidia pomorum) and the spire aphid (Aphis spiraeæ), look almost identical, but respond differently to pesticides and have different life cycles that may require spraying at different times. “It can be critical to differentiate which of the two species are present for effective management,” she says.

Rapid species-ID tests using real-time PCR are only going to allow screening for a specific target species. “You have to already know what you are looking for,” she says. But, she adds, in many cases, confirmation of a species is what’s really needed, and it’s possible to quickly screen for a few of them if there’s more than one important target.

These tests can be run easily by non-experts, using simple kits that have all of the materials and instructions for identifying a specific species from DNA extraction to interpret results.

Naaum’s colleague Prof. Bob Hanner, of the Biodiversity Institute of Ontario, says a test for a poinsettia pest Bemisia tabaci developed back in 2014 by his graduate student Andrew Frewin is the kind of species identification that could be discovered by the Biomeme device.

“Knowing which biotype is present can help inform management decisions in commercial greenhouses to balance the use of pesticides and biocontrol agents most efficiently,” says Hanner. He’s inviting collaboration to address any early detection and identification issues faced by the fruit and vegetable industry.

Photo right: Amanda Naaum holds a portable DNA identification device. Photo by Alaina Osborne.
Musings about NAFTA

BRUCE KELLY

There is an old joke about the sales guy that comes home from a sales call and announces: I have good news and bad news. The good news is that I got Walmart as a new customer, and the bad news is that I got Walmart as a new customer. Canadian trade with the U.S. is a little like having Walmart as a customer; it’s so big that it is an irresistible market. But it is so powerful that you may lose control of your product and your company in the process.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) (1994) has brought 25 years of stability and growth to trade across North America but that stability and almost free trade in goods and services are in jeopardy in the current round of NAFTA renegotiations. Repeated threats by U.S. President Trump to abandon NAFTA in favour of separate bi-national trade agreements is demanding with each round. The Produce Coalition for NAFTA believes that important issues such as border procedures, harmonization of regulation brings opportunities for improvements in free trade, but is concerned that the current negotiations are fixed on imposing new trade barriers instead of eliminating them. Proposals to make it easier to impose anti-dumping duties on produce threatens the dynamic nature of in-season trade of perishable fruits and vegetables. In a letter to Canadian trade officials the OFVGA agrees that the proposed new perishable/seasonal trade remedy provisions would open the door for frivolous and harassing investigations based on narrow and regionalized circumstances and ignores the seasonality of growing regions and differing maturity and availability of fruits and vegetables from south to north during the growing season. Allowing trade remedy powers to be triggered by a small group of regional producers might disrupt supply chain networks, distribution networks and retailers that have grown trade under the existing stable rules under NAFTA. The U.S. does not like to be told what to do or how to interpret trade disputes. As such they are calling for an end to Chapter 19 which governs the dispute settlement process. As an example, there is the U.S. commerce department practice of “zeroing” out the non-dumping margins when calculating whether dumping occurred over the course of an investigation. The World Trade Organization (WTO) has repeatedly found this interpretation inconsistent with international trade rules, yet the commerce department becomes duplicit in using this as a trade delay tactic. The department knows that it will take several years to be overturned, blocking access to markets in the meantime. The proposed changes would be a huge step backwards as they open the doors for frivolous and trade blocking tactics, a time honoured tradition which act as non- tariff barriers to trade. Just look at Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) that cost Canadian pork producers millions of dollars and years of blocked access to U.S. markets that allowed the American pork industry to grow while the Canadian industry languished that allowed the American pork industry to grow while the Canadian industry languished because of uncertainty. President Trump does not have the final say on NAFTA. Rather it would require an act of Congress, but that has not stopped him from setting the negotiation agenda which apparently gets more and more demanding with each round. Dismantling the pact would be a huge step backwards as they open the doors for frivolous and trade blocking tactics, a time honoured tradition which act as non- tariff barriers to trade. Just look at Country of Origin Labelling (COOL) that cost Canadian pork producers millions of dollars and years of blocked access to U.S. markets that allowed the American pork industry to grow while the Canadian industry languished because of uncertainty.

Bruce Kelly is programs manager, Farm & Food Care Ontario.

COMING EVENTS 2017

Dec 1 Ontario Apple Growers District 5 meeting, Holiday Inn, Bowmanville, ON
Dec 2 Prairie Fruit Growers of Manitoba Annual General Meeting, Winnipeg, MB
Dec 4 Ontario Apple Growers District 3 meeting, Grace United Church, Thornbury, ON
Dec 5-7 Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo, Grand Rapids, MI
Dec 6 CanadAGAP Annual General Meeting, Otonawa, ON
Dec 6 Ontario Potato Board Annual General Meeting, Cambridge Holiday Inn, Hall C, Cambridge, ON
Dec 12 Fresh Vegetable Growers of Ontario Annual General Meeting, OMAFRA office boardroom, Woodstock, ON
Dec 12 Keystone Potato Producers’ Association Annual General Meeting, Canad Inn, Portage la Prairie, MB

2018

Jan 10-12 National Potato Council Potato Expo, Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, Orlando, FL
Jan 16 Les Producteurs de Pommes du Québec (Apple Growers of Quebec) Annual General Meeting, L’Espace Rive-Sud, La Prairie, QC
Jan 16-18 Empire State Producers’ Expo, Onondaga Community College’s SRC Arena & Events Center, Syracuse, NY
Jan 21-24 North American Strawberry Growers’ Association Annual General Meeting, New Orleans, LA
Jan 23-24 Nova Scotia Fruit Growers’ Association Annual General Meeting and Convention, Old Orchard Inn, Greenwich, NS
Jan 23-24 Ontario Apple Academy Conference, Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston, ON
Jan 23-25 Manitoba Potato Production Days, Keystone Agriculture Centre, Brandon, MB
Jan 24 BC Agricultural Council Gala, Quality Hotel and Conference Centre, Abbotsford, BC
Jan 25-27 20th Annual Pacific Agriculture Show, ‘Tradex’ Exhibition Centre, Abbotsford, BC
Jan 31-Feb 1 Ontario Processing Vegetable Industry Conference, Four Points by Sheraton, London, ON
Feb 7-9 Fruit Logistica, Berlin, Germany
Feb 13 Canada Ag Day
Feb 15-16 British Columbia Fruit Growers’ Association AGM, Coast Capri, Kelowna, BC
Large stores are growing

Selling food is changing and it is changing fast. Food is a great draw and many mass-market retailers are using it. This is challenging for the traditional food distributors. Every dollar is important and the more fragmented the market, the tougher it is. One of the segments that has been growing in recent years are what I call large stores. They have different offerings and different pricing platforms but they all deliver great value.

Growing for different reasons

These large stores have been growing with significant increases of square footage in the last 10 years. We have experienced the growth of Walmart Super Centre and Costco is now operating in markets that would have been considered 'too small.' In western Canada Save On Foods, have been opening a lot of stores and now have a presence from B.C. to Manitoba. Loblaw have their Real Canadian Superstores in western Canada and Ontario and some Atlantic Superstores in Atlantic Canada would qualify. The challenge for suppliers working with Loblaw is that discount merchants are responsible for Real Canadian Superstore and the market division look after Atlantic Superstore.

Selling to large stores

Large stores deliver value in the market. They are not always the lowest price; this is the territory of the discount stores. Their size and listing base gives them economies of scale that allows these stores to operate with lower margins than the traditional food stores.

If you are selling to them most operate national programs. You will find a very similar offering in Walmart, Costco and Real Canadian Superstore, regardless of the market you are in. Walmart and Costco definitely see Canada as a market. It is interesting to note that in the large store segment of the Canadian market, U.S. retailers have the largest share. With approximately 36 million people, Canada is smaller than California so you can understand why they see Canada as a market.

Each retailer is different and if you are going to sell to them, value is key but so are other considerations.

Costco will expect a different pack size and they are looking for low labour options with pallet-ready displays. You will need to meet shipping for many warehouses, which is exciting and difficult. You will also be expected to sell a certain amount of product in a certain time period to earn your space. Costco merchants are looking for fewer SKUS and they know what they are selling where. If you are selling to Costco watch your pricing because other retailers know their margin and they will work it back to you to ensure what you are charging them.

Walmart continues its relentless pursuit of value, expecting volume growth to deliver economies of scale and better costs. The company is very good at execution and systems are integral to its business. Decisions are made in Canada but we have to remember Walmart is the largest retailer in the world. The company prefers fewer listings to deliver the same sales. There is more control label in Walmart than we used to see. The company continues to improve in the perishable departments.

Real Canadian and Atlantic Superstore at Loblaw have the highest penetration of control label and they do have the Canadian buying power and fresh expertise of Loblaw. The stores have evolved from large impersonal stores to smaller fresh segments with a broad grocery offering. Overall, in perishable departments, they are strong where they have good operators.

Save On Foods have increased their number of stores in Western Canada with a strong perishable presence, specials and a focus on local products. It will be interesting to see how the organization can support the recent growth.

Retailers can usually rally to get stores open; it is the ongoing operation after the support leaves that can be a challenge. It is a tough segment of the market and they are the only regional player trying to compete.

Opportunities

You can move volume in this segment of the market. They are interested in volume and defining the value. Large sizes are important and although they have more labour than discount stores, they do not have a lot. You will be successful if your items 'sell themselves' and require minimal handling.

Although every market is different we do see large portions of shelf space devoted to foods of the world. The stores have the space and they merchandise items that appeal to consumers looking for large quantities of these products.

Walmart, Loblaw and Save On Foods publish a weekly flyer which accounts for a significant portion of their volume. You will need to be in the ad game, aggressively, to be successful.

The resources at the office are similar to the resources at the store. They cannot afford a lot of people so if you plan to sell to these retailers do not expect a lot of personal contact from the office. They have a lot to do and they do not have much time for the ‘extras.’

If you have any questions about selling your products in traditional food stores please give me a call at (902) 489-2900 or send me an email at peter@skufood.com. Next month we will explore discount stores.

RETAIL NEWS

Sobeys’ new structure

We are learning more about Sobeys’ new structure. They have announced the fresh merchandising functions will be in Toronto and grocery merchandising functions will be in Stellarton, N.S. Directors for each functional area have been announced. We have not learned who the category managers will be but it should be announced shortly. Once these people are in their positions the real work of getting back to operating the business will begin. It is very difficult as people are not sure where they will be working, if at all.

Once the new people are announced suppliers should begin the process of developing relationships with these people. If you know them, great; if not you have to understand where you are starting. Do not assume your previous category manager will take the time to explain every supplier. Despite the best plans, they are either on a new job or left with no job.

After going through this at Loblaw I can tell you it really is the supplier’s responsibility to move forward.

Peter Chapman is a retail consultant, professional speaker and the author of A list Ear-T’s suppliers’ guide to retailer’s priorities. Peter is based in Halifax, N.S. where he is the principal at GPS Business Solutions and a partner in SKUfood.com, an online resource for food producers. Peter works with producers and processors to help them navigate through the retail environment with the ultimate goal to get more of their items in the shopping cart.

peter@skufood.com

Peter Chapman

THE GROWER
VALUE-ADDED PROCESSING

Hard pressed to craft a more profitable Canadian apple juice market

KAREN DAVIDSON

One of Canada’s fast-food chains has been hiding its success story under a bushel basket. For competitive reasons, the company doesn’t want to be named, but repeat orders are for thousands of bins of Ontario apples to be pressed into apple juice. Rather than source Chinese-made apple juice concentrate, the company has found profit in local product.

That’s the kind of hard news which encourages apple grower Brett Schuyler to get out of bed each morning. He’s also the point man for the Ontario Apple Growers when it comes time to negotiate apple juice prices with the province’s key processor: Lassonde’s Golden Town Apple Products Ltd in Clarksburg.

“The older generation may laugh at me and I understand they’ve been burned by the juice industry, but there’s nothing but growth potential,” says Schuyler. “The concentrate juice market relies on cheap labour and low shipping costs to be more competitive than fresh-pressed juice. Is it so unrealistic to think that this can change? Will places such as China be able to economically produce concentrate as its economy strengthens and labour costs go up?”

As Schuyler points out, Canadian consumers may not realize that their apple juice is coming from China, Poland or Chile. He suggests looking for brands such as Tropicana with labeling that teases “Never from concentrate.” This product is labelled “100% fresh-pressed Canadian apple juice with no water or sugar added.” No wonder, the taste is so bright.

For Schuyler and other apple growers, the juice industry is a marketing dilemma. Since the 1990s, the Canadian apple juice industry has sourced with the flows of Chinese apple concentrate at rock-bottom prices. As recently as 2016, Canada’s second-highest-valued agricultural export from China is apple concentrate worth $44.6 million. (see chart) Admittedly, some of that concentrate is processed and redirected to the U.S. But it’s a big number and still doesn’t include concentrate coming from other jurisdictions.

For the last decade or more, there hasn’t been much to negotiate on apple juice prices. The ‘grounders’ that don’t go to the fresh market have been almost worthless at a nickel per pound. The 2017 Ontario price is 6.3 cents per pound! With the huge investment in high-density orchards and increased labour costs, growers can’t be producing apples for a few cents per pound. It’s a challenge to cover packing costs.

If Canadian consumers were to search for a home-grown apple juice, they would likely find it in jugs at national retailers. And if they were to have a side-by-side taste comparison of apple juice with Chinese concentrate and Canadian fresh-pressed apple juice, the Canadian product would win hands down, Schuyler argues.

Currently, about 30 per cent of Ontario’s apples find their way to the processing channel: apple sauce, apple chips, slices, juice. That may seem like a high number, but consider that the industry standard of an 80 per cent packout leaves a lot of apples with no other home.

Algoma Orchards, Newcastle, Ontario offers perspective, having operated an apple juice facility since 2009. The factory wholesales and copacks “single-strength” juice or cider in jugs for major retailers. That means the apples are squeezed and juiced, then pasteurized with no preservatives.

It’s a steady business,” acknowledges Kirk Kemp, co-owner Algoma Orchards. “But when you look at what’s happened to the juice category in the last decade, it’s become very crowded. The consumer can get combinations of strawberry, banana and mango juice. The consumer can get carrot juice. It’s no longer just a choice between orange, apple and tomato juice. So I don’t see a big growth opportunity. Apple juice is a sideline for us.”

The real opportunity is to grow our own market,” says Sutcliffe. “If the provincial government supported us as they do craft brewers, then you would see a massive increase in ciders and demand for Ontario apples.”

Ontario cider sales topped $85 million at LCBO stores in 2016. However, imports comprise 70 per cent of cider sales, echoing the situation that grape growers face.

Cider makers are excelling in the category and challenging what constitutes a hard cider. Some are barrel-aging cider and infusing it with hops. Others are adding wild yeast strains. “We are straddling the worlds of wine and cider,” says Sutcliffe.

Continued on next page
Hard pressed to craft a more profitable Canadian apple juice market

Continued from last page

Jay Johnson, director of operations, for Golden Town Apple Products, has witnessed the same explosive growth in apple juice.

“In the last five years, juice for craft cider has gone from five to 25 per cent of the volume of our business,” says Johnson, based in Clarksburg. “Sales used to be stagnant, but no more. There is more to the juice industry than ground fruit.”

Processing customers are looking for co-pack opportunities and unique packaging. They are also looking for year-round supplies. Plastic bottles as well as glass bottles are in demand to portray a café image.

As Schuyler reviews this dynamic landscape, he sees room for a rejuvenated apple juice industry.

“When you’re at rock bottom, it can only go up,” says Schuyler. “Right now, we have to produce a perfect apple for our market, adding lots of costs to production. If the market for processing apples grew, it would take a lot of pressure off the grower. In Europe, cider orchards exist that rely on mechanical harvest. If Ontario develops a reliable, higher-paying juice market, then growers could take a hard look at producing juice apples using mechanical harvesters.”

“If you don’t have to grow a 100 per cent perfect apple,” Schuyler points out, “if there’s some fruit that’s dinged up with hail for example, then this scenario changes the grower’s thinking.”

Ginseng growers pursue opportunity in China and Vietnam

It wouldn’t be surprising if Air Canada has added another flight from Toronto and Vancouver to Shanghai to accommodate the numerous trade missions to China. The federal agriculture minister Lawrence MacAulay is home from a mid-November trade mission to China while Ontario’s premier Kathleen Wynne left on November 24. Destination: Nanjing (pop. 22 million), Chongqing (pop. 18 million), Shenzhen (pop. 11 million). From December 3-6, the premier will take the mission to Vietnam (pop. 92.7 million).

China is a familiar destination to the Ontario Ginseng Growers’ Association (OGGA) whose trade missions have benefitted from federal government funding of $420,000 over several years. Attendance at trade shows is key to meeting potential distributors.

As Remi Van De Slyke, OGGA chair, explains, trade shows are a good start but the Canadian presence must be constant. A social media campaign on Facebook in Hong Kong has been successful in raising awareness of the top quality of Canadian-grown ginseng.

For Vietnam, the thinking goes that almost 93 million people might be interested in transitioning from Korean ginseng to Canadian ginseng. While India is not on this current trade mission, there are plans to target consumers there with a message of the nutraceutical values of Canadian ginseng in soups, teas and cosmetics.

“The federal AgriMarketing program has transformed the ginseng industry in Ontario from an unknown entity to a global player,” says Van De Slyke. He says that more than 2.63 million kilograms are now exported, with a farmgate value of $219 million. Broadening markets is important for the Ontario industry that has witnessed acreage increases and falling prices in the last three years. With more volume, prices have dropped 20 per cent in the last year.

This year’s harvest yields are variable, says Van De Slyke, with averages of 3,000 pounds per acre.

“Demand is still strong and the hope is to get trade issues with the U.S. ironed out,” says Van De Slyke. There are domestic opportunities such as Chinese tourists visiting Vancouver, wanting to take back Canadian-quality ginseng. And in Toronto, the association had a presence at the Dragonboat Festival earlier this year.
FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY IN THE VALUE CHAIN

CanadaGap commits to unannounced audits

HEATHER GALE

Over the course of 2017, growth in participation has continued at a steady and stable pace. The number of participating companies now exceeds 3,100 across Canada and the United States. The program enjoys strong support from Canada’s retail, processing and food service sectors, as well as international recognition across the range of export markets in the U.S., Latin America, Europe and Asia.

Key Achievements

2017 has been a very busy and productive year for CanadaGap. Highlights include the following:

• Government Recognition: CanadaGap achieved full Government Recognition in 2017 under the Canadian Government Food Safety Recognition Program. Please see the section below to read more about what this means for the program and for CanadaGap-certified companies.

• Re-benchmarking of the CanadaGap program to GFSI (Global Food Safety Initiative) requirements Version 7 got underway this summer. The process will continue into the winter of 2018. An on-site assessment at the CanadaGap office will be part of the updated GFSI benchmarking process.

• Unannounced Audits: As part of new GFSI benchmarking requirements, Unannounced Audits were introduced by CanadaGap on April 1, 2017. Under this new element of the program, 5% of CanadaGap-certified companies are selected each year by their certification body to undergo an audit ‘unannounced’ – i.e., with only 2 to 5 business days’ notice.

Logistically, this can be challenging for the certification bodies and program participants, since it is already difficult to schedule audits for weather-dependent situations and activities like harvesting, and some crops experience seasonal fluctuations. Despite these challenges, CanadaGap is committed to rolling out the unannounced audit program to continue to drive integrity and credibility for its certification.

• Food Fraud: Also within the context of GFSI re-benchmarking, CanadaGap introduced new requirements to the 2017 standard relative to assessing and managing risks related to Food Fraud. Food Fraud is defined as economically motivated intentional adulteration of product that could impact consumer health. To assist with implementation and auditing of the new record-keeping requirement for Food Fraud, earlier this year CanadaGap issued a note providing further guidance to program participants, certification bodies and auditors regarding completion of the new Form U.

Audits were introduced by CanadaGap as part of the new record-keeping requirements, Unannounced Audits. Under this new element of the program, 5% of CanadaGap-certified companies are selected each year by their certification body to undergo an audit ‘unannounced’ – i.e., with only 2 to 5 business days’ notice.

Logistically, this can be challenging for the certification bodies and program participants, since it is already difficult to schedule audits for weather-dependent situations and activities like harvesting, and some crops experience seasonal fluctuations. Despite these challenges, CanadaGap is committed to rolling out the unannounced audit program to continue to drive integrity and credibility for its certification.

• Food Fraud: Also within the context of GFSI re-benchmarking, CanadaGap introduced new requirements to the 2017 standard relative to assessing and managing risks related to Food Fraud. Food Fraud is defined as economically motivated intentional adulteration of product that could impact consumer health. To assist with implementation and auditing of the new record-keeping requirement for Food Fraud, earlier this year CanadaGap issued a note providing further guidance to program participants, certification bodies and auditors regarding completion of the new Form U.

The ‘AQUA Wetland System’

“A new breed of constructed wetland”

AQUA Treatment Technologies Inc. designs and installs the ‘AQUA Wetland System’ (AWS) for tertiary treatment of many types of waste water, including sanitary sewage, landfill leachate, dairy farm & abattoir wastewater, greenhouse irrigation leachate water & mushroom farm leachate water (e. manure pile leachate) and high strength winery wastewater.

The ‘AQUA Wetland System’ is operated out of doors and can achieve year-round tertiary treatment of wastewater. This subsurface, vertical flow constructed wetland consists of sand & gravel beds planted with moisture tolerant plant species. Water is pumped vertically from cell to cell. There is no open or standing water. Treatment occurs through physical filtration & biological degradation. Plants shade & insulate the cells, cycling nutrients while preventing algae growth. There is no production of sludge.

The AWS has been approved for use by the Ontario Ministry of Environment through over 40 Environmental Compliance Approvals. Recently the Region of Niagara began approving the AWS for treatment of ‘small flow’ winery wastewater i.e. < 10,000 liters per day. Other agencies who have issued approvals include Health Canada, USEPA and OMAFRA. Recent projects include:

1) treatment & reuse of greenhouse irrigation leachate water at greenhouses in Niagara & Haldimand
2) treatment of winery wastewater at Greenlane Estates Winery & numerous other in Niagara
3) treatment of landfill leachate at sites in Pembroke, Niagara and Alabama

For additional information please contact Lloyd Rozema at 905-327-4571 or email lrrozema@aqua-tt.com

Proportion of CanadaGap participants represented by crop grouping

August 31, 2017

Operations Enrolled by Province

August 31, 2017

BC 37%

AB 5%

SK 1%

MB 3%

ON 20%

QC 10%

NB 4%

NS 1%

PE 5%

Other 8%

Operations Enrolled by Province

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Potato

Greenhouse

Tree & Vine

Leafy Vegetable

Small Fruit

Combined Veg.

Repak/Wholesale/ Brokerage

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NS 1%

PE 5%

Other 8%
FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY IN THE VALUE CHAIN

CanadaGap commits to unannounced audits

Year-over-Year Increase in CanadaGap Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year (Sept – Aug)</th>
<th>Number of producers</th>
<th>Increase</th>
<th>Growth Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>537</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
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<td>2440</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>2526</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-2015</td>
<td>2927</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-2016</td>
<td>3042</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>3127</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Board Chair and Vice-Chair

The Board Chair and Vice-Chair are elected annually. Currently serving as Chair is Jack Bates, and Hugh Bowman as Vice-Chair. The Board meets face-to-face twice annually and holds regular conference calls. The full list of directors and their biographies are posted at: http://www.canadagap.ca/about-us/governance/

Continued from last page

• Sustainability: Last year, CanadaGap entered into a partnership with the North American Potato Sustainability Initiative (PSI) to offer verification audits for potato growers.

The first Potato Sustainability audits occurred in late 2016 and early 2017 in conjunction with the processing potato shipping season. Nine CanadaGap auditors have been cross-trained on the PSI requirements.

Program Participation

Over 3,100 producers are now participating in CanadaGap. The table below shows year-over-year growth in the number of producers participating in the program. The growth rates below are net of departures from the program, which may be due to changes in a farming operation, retirement, voluntary termination of certification, etc.

Participation Trends

The following participation trends are significant for 2017:

• The rate of growth in CanadaGap participation has slowed over the past year, to 3%. There were a significant number of retirements and farm sales in 2016-17, as growers aged out of their operations. However, the growth in enrolments continues to offset those leaving the program.
• For the first time, the fastest growing participation rate across the provinces was in Alberta, thanks to the entry of several new haskap growers. Ontario has the next greatest increase in enrolments, made up mostly of potato growers enrolling in Option C, and repackaging and wholesaling operations. Modest increases were also seen in segments of the Quebec and British Columbia industries, as packers and processors increasingly seek to source their supply of product from certified producers.
• Growth in Option D enrolments for repackaging, wholesaling, and brokerage operations continues to increase, up nearly 20% over last year.
• U.S. grower participation in the program also continues to rise. CanadaGap is attracting American farmers who are organizing in groups to pursue food safety certification.
• BC maintains the highest enrolment levels overall, representing 35% of all CanadaGap-certified companies. This number has dropped from its peak of 42% of all participating producers in 2016.
• Participation in the four-year audit cycle has leveled off, with very little change in the number of Option A1 and A2 participants since last year. Approximately 25% of CanadaGap-certified farms participate in these certification options.
• Enrolments in Option C (annual audit) have exceeded half of all program participants for the first time, representing 52% of all certified companies this year.
• Group certifications have seen a modest decline, standing at 21% of all enrolments, which is down from 24% last year.
• For the purposes of analyzing participation trends, enrolment figures are broken down by five crop groupings:
  o Tree and Vine Fruit
  o Field Vegetables
  o Potatoes
  o Small Fruit
  o Greenhouse

What’s Ahead for 2018?

• GFSI Re-benchmarking to Version 7
• Implementation of GFSI Auditor Competency program
• Coming into force of the Safe Food for Canadians Regulations

Management Review

An annual management review of the program is held each June with senior management and representatives from the Board. The management review encompasses a review of:
• requests for modifications to the program
• performance of CanadaGap certification bodies
• complaints and their handling
• internal audit results
• auditor training undertaken and its outcomes
• provision of resources
• policies related to conflict of interest and confidentiality, among others.

• Continued promotion of CanadaGap inside and outside of Canada

Heather Gale is executive director, CanadaGap Program, CanAgPlus

Grower Pesticide Safety Course & Pesticide Safety for Farmer Assistants

Farmers must be certified to buy and use Class 2 or 3 pesticides on farms.

Farm workers who assist with pesticide application under the supervision of a Certified Farmer must be trained.

For a list of opportunities, visit www.o pep.ca
Made-in-Canada technology keeps Listeria at bay in candied apples

Example of the candied apples offered by Moyer Apple Products Ltd., Lincoln, Ontario.

In the ensuing years, the company’s turn-around is credited to three factors. “We know apples,” says Moyer. “None of our competitors have an agricultural background. Our apples are the key ingredient in addition to the caramel coating.”

Secondly, the company earned SQF Level 2 status accredited by the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) in 2014. The timing was serendipitous as they told their story in countless face-to-face meetings with clients.

Thirdly, their manufacturing partner Court Holdings invested in a new protocol and equipment developed with University of Guelph food safety researcher Dr. Keith Warriner and Kayla Murray. The new protocol is to combine a forced-air ozone reactor with a sequential advanced oxidative process treatment. The treatment effectively decontaminates apples as a more effective approach than simply washing. The research describing the treatments is scheduled to be published in the Journal of Food Protection.

“This has been an expensive venture,” says Moyer. “The proof of concept was at the University of Guelph, but we had to make this into a commercial scale process.”

As Amber Gulbis, Moyer Apple Products points out, limiting any contact with water is a good step because water near caramel or chocolate causes the coating to seize. The story has gained traction.

“We have visited the food safety teams of every customer,” says Gulbis. “We’re happy that we’ve managed to keep and gain market share due to implementing the new technology.”

In these three years, and as other food safety stories have emerged, food companies and retailers are on the front lines of ensuring food safety.

In the past, buyers told the food safety people what they wanted,” remembers Moyer. “Now it’s the food safety scientists who are the first to determine who to buy from. Fresh produce is operating in different times now.”

Now it’s the food safety scientists who are the first to determine who to buy from. Fresh produce is operating in different times now.

~ PAUL MOYER

Bad news can affect entire industries. In October 2014, that’s what happened when Listeria-contaminated caramel apples in the U.S. broadsided an innocent bystander in Canada. Moyer Apple Products near Lincoln, Ontario had a clear hill of health but had to watch all candied apples pulled from American retailer shelves in the run-up to Christmas.

“How they reacted is a good case study,” says Dr. Keith Warriner, associate professor, Department of Food Science, University of Guelph. “They had no connection with the crisis in the U.S., but they did not let the tide go by in hopes that the business situation would return to normal. Instead they were proactive and developed a new system to enhance food safety in their product.”

Business for Moyer Apple Products was still stable for Canadian retailers such as Loblaw, Sobeys and Costco, however it was a staggering blow to lose sales from Maine to Miami. Sales were off by 50 per cent due to drop in demand once candy apples produced in California were identified as the source of the Listeria outbreak. Retailers and consumers viewed all candy apples in the same light despite only one company being implicated.

“After the recall in October 2014, we were the only producer to have product,” says Paul Moyer, Moyer Apple Products Inc. “We shipped a lot of product to the U.S. and everything was taken off the shelves before Christmas. We had a hard time convincing our customers to carry product the following year for Valentine’s Day, Easter and Mother’s Day.”

In the run-up to Christmas, we had a hard time convincing our customers to carry product the following year for Valentine’s Day, Easter and Mother’s Day.

KAREN DAVIDSON

BRINGING FOOD SAFETY OUT OF THE BINDER AND INTO THE FIELD

CanadaGAP Food Safety Forms are now Fully Interactive and On-Line

GAP APP FEATURES INCLUDE:

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• All forms in one space
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• Forms are updated automatically when CanadaGAP publishes new forms (annually)
• No more searching for documents at audit time
• Access forms from anywhere on your operation
• Easy access via tablet
• More inclusive - provide multiple user access to any form as needed

Visit us at: www.gapapp.ca

L-R: Paul Moyer, Dr. Keith Warriner, Amber Gulbis

Example of the candied apples offered by Moyer Apple Products Ltd., Lincoln, Ontario.

With the new protocol to seize. The story has gained traction.
FOCUS: FOOD SAFETY IN THE VALUE CHAIN

Hyperspectral imaging shines a light on foreign objects and reduces food waste

KAREN DAVIDSON

Leafy greens are tender to eat but tough to handle. The perennial problem is about to get easier with hyperspectral imaging that will help processing plants extract foreign material and save hundreds of thousands of dollars per year in food waste. In the next five years, processors expect to share more precise information with growers on which genetics and field practices lead to the tastiest greens.

That’s a gargantuan promise explained by Doug Alexander, director of engineering for Ippolito Produce Inc, Burlington, Ontario. The company that specializes in a range of vegetables and ships all over North America has a big appetite to innovate.

“Leafy greens such as spinach, kale and arugula are hard to inspect,” says Alexander. “They all have low densities compared to their weight. Imagine your front lawn with plant material blowing all over it.”

The variability of leafy greens is in colour, size and species. Baby spinach, for example, is the size of a loonie whereas curly spinach can be the size of your palm.

A leopard frog in your spinach! Easily detected and rejected. But the optical sorters must distinguish between various shades of green, slight gradations similar to a paint chip sample. Even with today’s technology, optical sorters don’t spot foreign material very well. What happens is that the machines over-inspect, discarding a lot of leaves that are perfectly edible.

“In the studies in our plant, we discovered that 95 per cent of the discards were good,” says Alexander. “That was a huge amount of food waste.”

Global suppliers of optical sorters are challenged to meet Ippolito’s more exacting needs of increasing processing speed because they are in the business of increasing processing speed in industrial settings. Alexander was determined to find a made-in-Canada solution. Lucky for him, about an hour’s drive away in Waterloo is a world-class company called P&P Optica.

A fortunate confluence of meetings with P&P Optica at Conestoga College Institute of Food Processing Technology, through a fortunate confluence of meetings with P&P Optica at Conestoga College Institute of Food Processing Technology, brought Alexander to P&P Optica. "This was Star Trek technology," Alexander concludes.

Beyond the benefits of identifying foreign objects and reducing food waste, this technology moves the food chain to an “aha” moment. Once software experts can compare chemical signals – a plant’s respiration rate for example – then that information can be monetized into identifying plants that will have longer shelf life or better taste.

The next step will be to create a database of plant signals whereby Ippolito field representatives will be able to communicate what spinach varieties and perhaps what field practices result in the tastiest eating experience.

As Alexander explains, hyperspectral imaging will become a management tool. Beyond grading and sorting produce at higher accuracy, the processor plans to optimize its knowledge with contracted growers. In the next five years, perhaps drones will be able to fly over fields and photograph the chemistry of the field.
Building closer relationships with frontline researchers on food safety

KAREN DAVIDSON

With food safety at the forefront of issues in the value chain, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) created a full-time position earlier this year. Jeff Hall, food safety specialist, has been attending conferences and committees of the following: Global Food Safety Initiative, International Association of Food Protection, Canadian Food Research Institute, Canadian Research Institute in Produce Standards, International Federation of Produce Standards, Canadian International Association of the Americas, the Food Safety Initiative, Centre for Food Safety, Global Food Safety Initiative, Canadian Research Institute in Produce Standards.

“The CPMA board has invested the necessary resources to support domestic and global food safety efforts in a manner that does not duplicate existing efforts but supports and enables our members to produce and sell safe and nutritious products in Canada and around the world,” says Ron Lemaire CPMA president.

“The goal is to ensure CPMA’s members have access to the latest scientific, regulatory and educational information so they can make sound, science-based food safety decisions for their businesses,” says Hall.

Part of the CPMA strategy is to create a member-supported food safety fund that will be earmarked for research and education in a Canadian context.

“We will be working with academia, researchers, industry and government to leverage the dollars through various collaborations,” says Hall. “We are hoping to have the first project initiated early in 2018. We are encouraging all of our members, whether based in Canada or involved in cross-border trade, to support this exciting opportunity.”

In support of the membership, CPMA will be running a number of Food Safety Forums across Canada, and in the U.S., in advance of the new Safe Food for Canadians Regulations (SFCR) and the U.S. Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). These will be day-long seminars with participation from government and industry to help prepare members for the regulatory changes which are coming. Expect a kick-off announcement at the Nova Scotia Horticultural Congress in January 2018 with stops to follow January through March in Montreal, Toronto, Calgary, Vancouver, Salinas and possibly the U.S. northwest.

Once the dates are finalized, expect the agenda to focus on licensing requirements, preventative controls and traceability. Look for future communications about Listeria monocytogenes and whole genome sequencing. For updates, go to www.cpma.ca.

Paper labels allow traceability, sustainably

Small things count in traceability of fresh produce. Those ubiquitous labels with product lookup (PLU) codes are what keep the industry moving with confidence.

Applying computer-generated labels is no small task with dozens of individual commodities and millions of individual pieces. Since 2001, Accu-Label International Inc. has been meeting the needs of an industry hungry for the means to track produce cost effectively.

From a food safety perspective, the labels are made of paper, not plastic, and the code is printed with water-based inks. The print-and-apply system has been the most successful solution in operation for almost a decade. What’s new is the ability to apply lot codes to an entire carton of fresh produce.

“We’re more than just a labeling company,” says Joe Sleiman, president of Accu-Label Inc. near Windsor, Ontario. A sister company called Ag-Tronic Control Systems provides the equipment needed for laser-fast application. A new tray labeler was launched at the recent Produce Marketing Association Fresh Summit in New Orleans.

“We have the most successful solution in operation for almost a decade,” says Terri Michienzi, designer of the FLEX-TL and Joe Sleiman.

The new FLEX-TL will allow the customer to choose his or her options to build a system with the features they absolutely need and add on the features they want, for a reasonable price, while offering the customer the peace of mind of having the reputable ORB-it brand.”

Accu-Label patented a print-and-apply system that is fully-modular tray labeler designed to suit the customer’s unique and individual requirements.

“We’re seeing customers settle for low-quality products based on price point alone,” said Sleiman. “Sadly, they end up paying more in the long term to rectify low label percentages, or pay additional service costs for unreliable equipment. The new FLEX-TL will allow the customer to choose his or her options to build a system with the features they absolutely need and add on the features they want, for a reasonable price, while offering the customer the peace of mind of having the reputable ORB-it brand.”

Accu-Label patented a print-and-apply system that is upgraded constantly with new features. The latest is a print vision verification that validates the quality of the printed information before the label is applied to the product. This solution allows the customer to control the quality of the product upstream before reaching the retailer.

Jeff Hall, CPMA food safety specialist
Protection required against cyber bandits

KAREN DAVIDSON

Not so long ago, western movies had a stock phrase for cowboys committing extortion: Stick ‘em up. In today’s lexicon, the new demand is from invisible raiders: Show me your backups.

Today’s computer hackers have an equal opportunity outlook. Whether the victim is male or female, big or small, it’s really not about high-profile names per se.

Cyber attacks on companies such as Target, Sony and Canadian Tire have generated national headlines, raising awareness of the growing threat of cyber crime. Surprisingly, despite these significant security breaches, 85 per cent of small business owners believe their company is safe from hackers, viruses, malware and/or data breaches. This disconnect is largely due to the widespread, albeit mistaken, belief that small businesses are unlikely targets for cyber attacks. In reality, data thieves are simply looking for the path of least resistance. As more and more companies strengthen their data security, small businesses are becoming increasingly attractive targets – and the results are often devastating for small business owners.

Cyber companies think they’ve been a specific target,” explains Glenda Johnston, commercial marketing director for Dalton Timmis Insurance based in Ancaster, Ontario. “But cyber security attacks are not personal. The hackers are simply running through tons of data looking for a weakness in your network.”

A recent case was San Miguel, an Argentine citrus company, which lost $15US million due to the hacking that hit shipping giant Maersk. The breach in Maersk’s obligations resulted in merchandise losses of up to 70 days in lost container- ers and sales cancellations.

Think this situation can’t happen to you? Johnston cites a recent Ontario-based manufacturer which received malware embedded in an invoice. The company controller opened the invoice and within 20 minutes, 120,000 files were encrypted with an unknown password.

Before your business is crippled, call your insurance broker. Many of the mainstream insurance companies now offer basic expense mitigation coverage in their policies. The cost is usually about $100 per the year, but be aware that you get what you pay for. If your company needs more robust insurance and you’re looking to cover extortion costs, stand alone Cyber Security/Privacy Breach coverage is the answer. Premiums start at about $1,500 per year. As a client, your cost of insurance will be based on the merits of exposure. Insurance coverage exten-

• Network extortion threat – coverage for expenses incurred to respond to an extortion threat
• Breach event services and expenses – coverage for a variety of costs incurred such as breach management expenses, breach notification expenses, credit monitoring expenses and forensic expenses
• Corporate brand protection/crisis management expenses – coverage to provide public relations services to repair reputational damage
• Business interruption – provides reimbursement for loss of income while restoring operations as a result of a security breach
• Data protection and system restoration – coverage for expenses incurred to restore systems as a result of a security breach
• Reward expenses – coverage for expenses that lead to the arrest and conviction of a person responsible for attack, extortion threat or unauthorized access

The level of coverage for your business is based on your specific operations and range of exposure. It’s important to work with a broker who can identify your areas of risk so a policy can be tailored to fit your unique situation.

If your business is hit by ransomware, take the following steps:

• Don’t do anything further on your computer systems. Consult your IT department or supplier.
• Immediately contact the Canadian Cyber Incident Response Centre to report the incident. Staff can assist your business to mitigate further damage
• Report the incident to the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre.
• Contact your insurance broker to discuss next steps.
• Every company, every employer is required to safeguard the data of its employees and clients. That means the names and addresses of employ- ees, banking information and social insurance numbers. If this information is extracted, even by fraudulent means, the company is still responsible and may be subject to fines by the privacy commissioner of Ontario.

“If you collect it, you’re responsible,” says Johnston. “It’s not enough to say a third-party is responsible for payroll or that your information is stored in the cloud.”

Her advice is to ensure a good backup system is in place. Backing up data every week may not be enough. Every day may be necessary if you calculate the time it would take to rebuild the day’s entries. Storing backup at off-site, secure locations is a good idea. Don’t think a filing cabinet in your office will suffice. A filing cabinet won’t survive in the case of fire. And finally, be sure to test your backup system.

“In the last couple years, cyber security has become more top of mind for Canadian business,” says Johnston. In 2015, Canadians were affected by 1,680 ransomware attacks per day. In a year, those numbers doubled. Experts recommend against paying the ransom. When looking for insurance against malicious ransomware, see what first responders are listed on the policy. More insurance companies are contracting experts to mitigate damage in the first minutes or hours of hacking.

As businesses plan for 2018, it’s a good time to review insurance policies. Forward thinking and planning could prevent an unwanted and costly cyber attack on your business.
Tracking the march of leek moth in Ontario

TRAVIS CRANMER & HANNAH FRASER

Leek moth (Acrorhagis assectella) is an invasive pest of European and Asian origin. The first North American detection occurred near the National Capital Region (Ottawa) in 1993. Since then, the leek moth has spread west through Ontario, east towards the maritime region (Québec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island), and south into the United States (New York and Vermont). Long-range dispersal may occur through wind currents and by movement of infested plant material. Most injury in Ontario has occurred in leek and garlic, generally on small, diversified farms.

Leek moth is an Allium specialist, attacking both wild and cultivated species. When left unmanaged, leek can cause significant damage to garlic, leeks, onions (dry bulb, green), shallots and chives. Leaves, stems, flower stalks, scapes, and bulbs may all be affected. Feeding injury varies depending on leaf architecture of the crop. On flat-leaved alliums such as garlic and leek, leek moth larvae mine through folded leaves, creating pinholes and longitudinal grooves. In onions, shallots and chives, larvae feed inside the hollow leaves, creating “windowpaning” effect. Damage to the leaf causes a reduction in plant growth and creates entry points for fungi or bacteria. In garlic, leek, dry bulb onion, green onion and shallot, floating row covers are often the most effective pest management strategy, but they are not generally implemented over large acreages, likely due to feasibility concerns. As mentioned previously, these must be applied prior to adult activity in each generation. If possible, observe a three-year crop rotation and avoid planting near infested areas from the previous season. In garlic at scape removal, collect and destroy scapes that show any sign of leek moth damage. Burying and/or destroying plant debris at the end of the season will also reduce pupae and larval populations that remain in the field after harvest.

Potential biological control agents have been screened for effectiveness as a natural enemy against leek moth in several parts of the world. Diadromus pulchellus, a parasitic wasp naturally found in Europe, was released in 2018 within the Ottawa Valley following extensive screening for non-target impacts (AAFC and CABI Switzerland). Early research shows that D. pulchellus overwinters in Ontario, but its impact in reducing leek moth populations needs further evaluation.

We are conducting a survey in 2018 to determine the current range of leek moth in Ontario. If you observe leek moth damage please contact Travis Cranmer at travis.cranmer@ontario.ca or (519) 826-4963. For more information and visuals of leek moth damage and life stages, see OMAFRA factsheet 08-009, Leek Moth – A Pest of Allium Crops. Follow ONVegetables.com for up-to-date information about leek moth and other vegetable news.

Travis Cranmer is vegetable crops specialist and Hannah Fraser is entomologist for horticulture, OMAFRA.
As a vegetable crops specialist with a few summers under my belt, I have seen more than my fair share of problem fields. Typically the summer months will find me walking fields, counting insects, observing lesions and various stages of decay, and diagnosing any range of different pest, soil, environment or nutritional issues. Many growers joke that they only call me when they have a problem, which is actually quite true. But, I have also had the privilege over the years to have unbelievable access to the back roads of Ontario. I always feel a sense of home-grown pride when I see a familiar name on the totes at the grocery store. Ontario’s vegetable growers are an innovative, dynamic, highly competitive group of people. In addition to the thousands of pest and disease pictures I have collected through the years, I often stop to take pictures that celebrate the beauty of growing a crop. Here are a few of my favourites.

Elaine Roddy is vegetable crops specialist for OMAFRA, based in Ridgetown, Ontario.

A few of my favourite things

Ontario’s Draft Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy builds on the extensive soil health efforts of agricultural organizations and OMAFRA. Your input will help guide the development of a final Soil Health and Conservation Strategy for Ontario which will be released in spring 2018.

How to participate

Access the strategy at: ontario.ca/soil
Access the draft survey and comment by December 31st, 2017.
You may submit comments a number of ways:
• Submit your comment through the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry at ontario.ca/ebrr registry number 013-1373
• Fill out this feedback form found at ontario.ca/soil.
• Email: soilhealth@ontario.ca
• Fax: 519-826-3492
• Mail: Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
1 Stone Road West, 2nd floor
Guelph, ON N1G 4Y2

Open Houses

Three open houses were held in November in St. Isidore, Woodstock and Chatham. But you can still participate at one of the public open houses being held in December. Pre-registration is not required at these drop-in events. Participating in an open house will give you the opportunity to talk with OMAFRA soil staff, ask questions and provide input:

1. December 14, Codrington Community Centre, 2992 Rd 30, Codrington, ON, K0K 1R0 (3-6pm)
2. December 15, Flesherton KinPlex, 2 Highland Dr., Flesherton N0C 1E0 (3:15-5:30 pm)

Soil health

Ontario’s Draft Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy builds on the extensive soil health efforts of agricultural organizations and OMAFRA. Your input will help guide the development of a final Soil Health and Conservation Strategy for Ontario which will be released in spring 2018.

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• Mail: Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
1 Stone Road West, 2nd floor
Guelph, ON N1G 4Y2

Open Houses

Three open houses were held in November in St. Isidore, Woodstock and Chatham. But you can still participate at one of the public open houses being held in December. Pre-registration is not required at these drop-in events. Participating in an open house will give you the opportunity to talk with OMAFRA soil staff, ask questions and provide input:

1. December 14, Codrington Community Centre, 2992 Rd 30, Codrington, ON, K0K 1R0 (3-6pm)
2. December 15, Flesherton KinPlex, 2 Highland Dr., Flesherton N0C 1E0 (3:15-5:30 pm)

Soil health

Ontario’s Draft Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy builds on the extensive soil health efforts of agricultural organizations and OMAFRA. Your input will help guide the development of a final Soil Health and Conservation Strategy for Ontario which will be released in spring 2018.

How to participate

Access the strategy at: ontario.ca/soil
Access the draft survey and comment by December 31st, 2017.
You may submit comments a number of ways:
• Submit your comment through the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry at ontario.ca/ebrr registry number 013-1373
• Fill out this feedback form found at ontario.ca/soil.
• Email: soilhealth@ontario.ca
• Fax: 519-826-3492
• Mail: Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
1 Stone Road West, 2nd floor
Guelph, ON N1G 4Y2

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When Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay opened the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, he was swarmed with Toronto’s urban media. The surprise? All of their questions were about the upcoming trade mission to China.

MacAulay ended the trade mission November 21, with a multitude of new deals in Shanghai and Guangzhou. These efforts will help Canada reach its goals of doubling bilateral trade with China and growing global agri-food exports to $75 billion by 2025. Shanghai and Guangzhou are key economic centres, presenting an opportunity to increase sales of food products.

Highlights were:

- Vancouver’s Sinova Foods International and its partner, an importer of Canadian wine and icewine, China’s Legend Wine Group. Industry expects the deal will boost sales to China by $15 million over three years.
- The Wild Blueberry Association of North America and China’s Jin Jiang International signed a collaborative agreement to strengthen product development, market promotion and health research.
- The Government of Canada signed a new arrangement and memorandum of understanding with China, including:
  - the 2017-18 Cooperative Arrangement between the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and China’s counterparts, the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine (AQSIQ) to set a path for continued stable trade of agricultural products, including canola and expanded meat access.
  - Renewed the MoU on Biotechnology between the CFIA and China’s Ministry of Agriculture.
- The marquee event during Minister MacAulay’s visit to Shanghai was Food and Hospitality China, the largest food trade show in China specifically targeting international food and beverage suppliers for the Chinese market. He received a tour of the Canada Pavilion, meeting many of the 82 Canadian exhibitors in attendance. In terms of sales, industry representatives reported some $10.3 million in on-site sales, and $42.7 million in anticipated sales over the next year.

While supermarkets remain the main distribution channels for packaged food in China, e-commerce sites are increasingly taking over, thanks to a growing middle class and more smartphone and Internet users. Seizing on this trend while in Guangzhou, the minister met with VIP.COM, one of the country’s top-three developers of e-commerce platforms, and showcased the safe, high-quality Canadian food products available on Chinese e-commerce platforms.

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The Minister participated in cooking demonstrations for Chinese stakeholders organized by Canada Beef Inc., the Canola Council of Canada, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA), with the latter project supported by the governments of Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador as part of pan-Atlantic efforts to grow trade and investment opportunities for Atlantic businesses through the Atlantic Growth Strategy. In Shanghai, Minister MacAulay also helped launch the promotion of “Canada Food Week” at well-known grocery retail chain CitySuper to highlight Canadian food products.

China has become the world’s largest e-commerce market with online retail sales exceeding C$980 billion in 2016 – 39.2 percent of the world total – and is expected to reach C$1.3 trillion by 2019.

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Nov 20, 2017 news release.
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Underpinning of our many plant faced with the loss of the with spillover to beef producers were closed. It is much like electricity plants when they electric power. They are very similar extent as those faced back in the war. However, they can be handled like.

Harris.

During WII, the successful crews were the ones who practised on days off instead of each day. They developed well managed and understood bombing runs with virtually no straight lines right up to the final 10 seconds so as to avoid both flak (anti-aircraft fire) and night fighters. They learned techniques to deal with emergencies like being coned in searchlights, and for when engines failed. Just like the athletes of today, those who practised the most seemed to have the best results.

We need to remember those lessons. The approach to these reviews must include being engaged from day one or even before that. It must include sharing our use knowledge, our on-farm practices, and especially the potential impacts of any change from the status quo. It must include being involved at every stage -- provide help, guidance and data wherever and whenever possible to 'Get it right the first time.' When I suggest ‘we,’ I actually mean all the players. Everyone must step up to get the best possible outcome.

The powers that be made sure that the experienced crews stayed put in a squadron to help teach the new 'sprig' crews. The highest losses came on a new crew’s first or second trip. That is not to say that a crew approaching their 30th trip (end of a tour) could not be shot down. ‘It’ happened. We too may not win every debate in re-evaluation. It is not even about ‘winning’ –– it is about survival of the active ingredient to keep us competitive.

Growers need an arsenal of detection products that can do the job with the minimum of applications, minimum of product, and in an economical way. We want to maintain the efficacy of these products as long as possible too. Most of those that are threat-ened with loss are the multi-site mode of action products that, in addition to their efficacy against many fungi, are also the basis of managing resistance to the newer single-site mode of action products that are quite resistance-prone. Loss of the multi-site products is a double whammy. That is why our potential loss of use is so comparable to other tragic losses in Canadian agriculture. We could lose the ability to produce many fruits and vegetables in an economical way without these tools. In fact, we are not simply talking about the loss of some fungicides; we are facing the loss of our ability to grow several crops in Canada at all!

Would the consumer even know or care? The produce counters would still be full. There would be many fewer 'Local Produce' signs however as this produce would be coming from other countries that still get to use all these fungicides and insecticides. Processed goods would also be sourced from away, and consumers would mostly not know the place of origin. It would be too late by then to think about Buy Local, Carbon Footprint, and Produce of Canada. It would be too late to even consider growers to go back to an old commodity once they give it up. It would be too costly and non-competitive to try to grow these crops with the very expensive and likely short-lived alternatives currently available.

In spite of all of this, there is an even bigger issue that we face. If registrants see that Canada can and does cancel uses for ‘reasons’ such as these, then why would they risk fur-ther entry of new products here? If their confidence in ‘the system’ is shattered, they will vote to stay away. Then the not only have no present, we have no future either. This is not over-reach. I have heard these very sentiments being expressed!

SLUGGO® is an effective, specially formulated slug & snail bait that contains iron phosphate, a compound commonly found in soil. SLUGGO® causes slugs & snails to immediately cease feeding on plant tissue after ingesting even small amounts of this bait. Any uneaten SLUGGO® will degrade and become part of the soil. It will not harm pets and wildlife.

CRAIG’S COMMENTS

Using history to fix the problem

During WII, the authori-
INTERNATIONAL

MAINE

Searching for solutions for blackleg disease

International researchers gathered in Bangor, Maine in early November for the 2017 Dickeya and Pectobacterium Summit. The blackleg disease threatens the potato industry, not just in the United States but everywhere.

"This is not an emerging problem," said Steven Johnson, cooperative extension professor, University of Maine. "This is an existing one we are trying to get ahead of."

At the heart of the problem? The pathogen will not the seed, so that the plant does not take root and produces nothing.

Growers are warned to be vigilant in sourcing seed for next year’s crop.

Source: FreshPlaza.com

MAITLAND

Winter pears stamped with edible inks

At the recent Futurpera world pear expo in Ferrara Italy, native company Lesepidado intrigued buyers with its equipment to impress a logo on pears with an edible ink. The concept has been used with cakes and confectionaries, but is now being extended to the produce industry.

The idea is attractive to organic growers who want to replace conventional stickers. The machines can be integrated into a packing line as a series to keep up with packagers.

Source: FreshPlaza.com

MICHIGAN

Seasonal workers hard to source

Michigan’s apple growers are increasingly worried about sourcing seasonal workers to harvest a crop worth $293 million in 2016. The state holds fifth place in the U.S. for registered migrant and seasonal farm workers.

The H-2A visa program has been a lifeline, responsible for 6,500 workers in the state in 2017. Almost a decade ago, there were only 440 workers under the program. While farmers complain about the bureaucratic process of paperwork, having to predict their expected crop and forecasting the number of workers needed, they are grateful for the quality of workers, many from Mexico.

Source: FreshPlaza.com

NETHERLANDS

Asparagus robot launched

Dutch start-up company Cerescorn presented the first asparagus robot at ‘Spargelmesse’, the largest asparagus fair in the world, on November 22. According to the expo’s website, the company has developed a selective asparagus harvesting machine that can harvest crops in parallel over three rows.

The patented underground detection method is based on proximity sensor technology, which detects the asparagus under the soil. The coordinates of the stem are forwarded to a picking robot, which picks the asparagus without requiring the machine to stop. The hole which is formed by the picking action in the bed is then re-filled to ensure uniformity of the bed and to prevent following asparagus stems from growing bent or crooked.

The three-row version of the machine can be best used during the season for up to 50 hectares of crops, promising to replace 60 to 75 seasonal workers. According to Cerescorn, underground detection on the film insert can be dispensed with. The amortisation period is two to four years.

Source: HorticDaily.com

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Source: FreshPlaza.com
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